

Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions
(EPP/MSI) Undergraduate Scholarship Program (USP)

Frequently Asked Question (FAQs)

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Scholarship Recipients

What happens once I am selected as an EPP/MSI USP recipient?

Scholarship recipients will be notified by NOAA via an email. NOAA will follow-up with an appointment letter which must be signed and returned indicating acceptance of the student scholarship award. All student scholars, during the first summer, must participate in an eleven-week summer internship which includes a 2-week **mandatory** orientation program at the NOAA Silver Spring Metro Center Campus in Silver Spring, Maryland beginning mid- May.

A NOAA support contractor will coordinate the student scholarship recipient's travel and apartment housing arrangements for the first summer internship in Silver Spring, Maryland. All flights arrive at Washington National Airport on the Sunday prior to the start of the mandatory orientation program. NOAA pays for all pre-approved costs associated with the student scholarship recipients' travel. Pre-approved taxi and metro fares are reimbursed when accompanied by the appropriate original paperwork and receipts. A recipient, who chooses to drive a personal vehicle to Silver Spring, Maryland, after receiving prior approval from NOAA, will be reimbursed up to the cost of a round-trip airline ticket. NOAA does not recommend or encourage recipients to drive due to limited local parking in Silver Spring, Maryland.

1st Summer Internship: NOAA EPP/MSI USP scholars participate in two summer internships at NOAA facilities. The program pays for scholar's travel to the NOAA Orientation at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, and to approved NOAA offices and facilities where scholars conduct research and development activities. The first summer internship is spent at NOAA Headquarter Offices in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The scholars will be housed in a complex in close proximity to the NOAA Silver Spring campus.

Scholars are provided a list of internship opportunities located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area at the start of the first summer. It is the student's responsibility with the support of program staff, to identify an internship opportunity of interest and to contact the NOAA mentor to discuss a summer project. If the scholar and the mentor are in agreement, a description of the project is submitted to the NOAA EPP/MSI USP program staff. Scholars may also develop an internship opportunity, in coordination with a NOAA scientist and with the approval of the Program Office, based on their research interest.

2nd Summer Internship: A list of NOAA internship opportunities located nationwide is made available to all Office of Education scholarship recipients during the early fall semester. The program requires scholar, in their 2nd year of the program, travel during their winter term break to an approved NOAA site to interview and discuss the second summer internship. The site visit (not to exceed three days) provides the scholar with the opportunity to meet with the NOAA scientist(s) and discuss a research project of interest to both NOAA and the scholar for the student's second summer internship. The scholar is also allowed time to identify potential housing for the summer internship during the site visit. Scholars are provided a Travel Request form to complete and submit to the NOAA EPP/MSI program team for review and approval. The scholar begins the second ten-week summer internship the last week of May.

As part of the summer internship, scholars are required to complete a project plan, submit a bi-weekly training record and an evaluation of the program.

What are the responsibilities of an EPP/MSI USP student scholar?

Undergraduate student scholars are responsible for:

1. Attending the 2-week mandatory orientation program in May during the first year of the appointment;
2. Completing an agreed upon summer project within 9 weeks;
3. Submitting the Research Training record through an online system every 2 weeks during the summer internship;
4. Presenting their project at the end of each summer to the NOAA community in Silver Spring, MD 10 weeks after the internship begins;
5. Conducting a site visit during their winter or quarter break; and
6. Complete an approved NOAA mission relevant research project during their junior year in coordination with an academic mentor.

What is the purpose of NOAA's mandatory orientation program?

NOAA provides student scholars the opportunity to learn about the agency, meet senior managers and understand the mission of the agency. NOAA organizations and selected staff offices present their research programs and activities during the mandatory orientation program. In addition, NOAA organizations describe the types of projects that are/may be available for the summer internships.

During the mandatory orientation program NOAA OEd program staff present more detailed information about the student scholarship programs including finding a summer internship, selecting a NOAA mentor, travel procedures, student scholar's and NOAA mentor's responsibilities, stipend payments, and meeting the administrative support contractor. Tours of selected NOAA facilities are provided during the orientation.

Also during the mandatory orientation program, scholars will be assigned NOAA E-mail accounts that scholars are required to use for all official electronic communication between student scholars and the scholarship management team for the duration of the scholarship appointment. Photos are taken for NOAA ID badges that must be used at all NOAA facilities during the summer internships.

What is the dress code for NOAA's mandatory orientation program?

During the mandatory orientation program and the final presentation week student scholarship recipients are required to dress in business casual attire. There will be photo opportunities with NOAA senior staff that may appear on NOAA web sites, in video clips and print media, brochures, etc. Examples of business casual attire include:

For Males:

- Sports jackets
- Slacks (dress and khaki)
- Shirts with collars
- Ties

For Females:

- Suits
- Skirts, slacks and blouses
- Sweaters

The dress code on tours is casual (sneakers, jeans, t-shirts, etc.), however, sagging pants are not acceptable.

At no time are cut-off jeans, shirts or blouses displaying midriffs, micro/miniskirts or flip flops appropriate.

Will I be paid for attending NOAA's mandatory orientation program?

Yes. The orientation program is part of the 1st summer internship.

When will I start receiving scholarship payments?

Student scholarship recipients receive bi-weekly stipends beginning the last week of May. Payments are deposited directly into the student scholar's checking or savings account every other Friday following the orientation program and upon receipt of the signed formal written acceptance of the scholarship award.

Will I be paid for attending the Final Presentation Week?

Yes. Student scholars are required to present their summary project reports during the final week and will be paid. The Presentation Week is considered the 10th week of the summer internship.

How does NOAA ensure students are enrolled full-time at a college/university?

At the start of each term student scholars are required to submit a Certification of Enrollment to NOAA to ensure that the student scholars continue their major field of study related to NOAA's mission and are enrolled full-time.

Can I transfer to another university after I accept an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship?

Yes. If a scholar transfers to another university or changes their major, NOAA and the support contractor must be notified in writing prior to the transfer or change in major to obtain approval for continued scholarship funds. EPP/MSI USP scholars must attend an MSI for the duration of the scholarship appointment.

May I study abroad during my junior or senior year?

Yes. A student scholar may study abroad during their junior or senior year and still receive the scholarship. To study abroad and maintain their scholarship the student scholar is required to provide the following documentation: (1) a letter from their university indicating they have been approved to study abroad and that the university is an accredited program from which their units will transfer; (2) a letter from their study abroad program indicating that the student scholar will be a full-time student, the duration of their study abroad program, and the courses the student scholar will be taking, that the scholar will receive letter grades and the grades will be transferred; and, (3) upon their arrival at their study abroad institution, a letter from the institution certifying full-time status with a copy of the student scholar's course schedule and an updated contact information sheet will be sent to the EPP/MSI Undergraduate Program staff. Student scholars must complete their site-visit and finalize all logistics for the upcoming summer internship **prior** to departing from the U.S. for the study abroad academic term.

Will my Scholarship be affected by other student scholarship or internship programs in which I am involved?

No. Student scholars are allowed to participate in other student scholarship and internship programs while receiving a NOAA scholarship. However, they must fulfill the requirements of the NOAA EPP/MSI USP which are: participation in the mandatory orientation program and final week of presentations; maintaining a full-time student status of enrollment; receiving a minimum 3.2 grade point average per academic term, as well as cumulatively; continuing their degree in a major field related to NOAA's mission; and, participation in the 2 10-week summer internships. Student scholars are not permitted to receive the scholarship if they are employed by the Federal Government. There are no exceptions or substitutions to these program requirements.

Is my financial scholarship subject to taxes?

NOAA recommends that all student scholars contact a tax professional to determine tax obligations of financial scholarships.

What is the process of obtaining a NOAA ID Badge?

The NOAA ID Badge is required to enter all NOAA facilities during the 10-week summer internships. Therefore, student scholars must adhere to Federal Security Procedures to obtain a NOAA ID Badge. The EPP/MSI USP program team will arrange for the scholar's fingerprinting in the Silver Spring security office during their 1st week of orientation. All student scholars must bring two forms of picture ID (i.e., state driver's license, student campus ID) to Silver Spring when reporting for the mandatory May orientation.

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Summer Internship

How do I find a summer Internship?

The purpose of the internship is to provide “hands-on” research experience involving scholars in NOAA-related science, research, technology, and policy activities. Opportunities to complete the internship are available throughout the United States and U.S. territories. NOAA offices, programs, and laboratories offer a wide variety of options for the internship experience. Contact the NOAA Office of Education or visit the NOAA website at <http://www.noaa.gov> to explore the range of NOAA opportunities available at a desired location. If an internship requires relocation for the summer, scholars receive travel and housing subsidies under the terms of the scholarship.

NOAA EPP/MSI will provide a username and password to scholars to access the on-line Student Scholarship Internship Opportunities (SSIO) system that identifies available internships nationwide. The summer internship opportunities include a brief description and location of each project, contact information for the NOAA mentor, and a summary of the tasks associated with the project. NOAA program staff is available to assist scholars as needed. However, the scholars are advised to contact the NOAA mentor directly to discuss the project further and to determine their interest. If a mutual agreement is reached, the scholar may e-mail the mentor an updated resume and must e-mail the NOAA EPP/MSI Program information about the summer internship opportunity. After the NOAA EPP/MSI Team approves the scholar's participation in a project, the scholar and the mentor then decide on the date and time (not to exceed three days) for a site visit. The scholar must submit a Travel Request electronically to the NOAA EPP/MSI USP team for approval prior to the site visit. NOAA will e-mail the scholar and NOAA mentor to confirm or disapprove the selection of the summer internship. If approved, EPP/MSI will contact the administrative support contractor, NOAA mentor, and scholar to proceed with travel arrangements. All scholars must finalize their internship selections by March 31.

What happens once I have identified a potential Summer Internship?

Once a scholar has identified an internship and received approval from the NOAA EPP/MSI Team, scholars must submit a Travel Request Form to NOAA at epp.usp@noaa.gov for approval of a site visit. NOAA will approve or deny the Travel Request and copy the NOAA mentor and support contractor. If approved, the support contractor will contact the scholar to coordinate travel arrangements for the site visit. Funds will be made available for students to conduct only one site visit. The purpose of the site visit is to allow the Scholar to meet the NOAA mentor, their staff, tour the facility, and further discuss the summer project, identify summer housing and assess transportation needs.

The NOAA support contractor will purchase an airline or train ticket, pre-pay the hotel, and reimburse the scholar for pre-approved car rental and meals while in a travel status. Under no circumstances should scholars purchase their own airline, bus, or train ticket to or from their internship site or NOAA Headquarters. Scholars will not be reimbursed for airline, bus, or other unapproved travel costs.

Scholars must submit all original travel receipts for reimbursement to the NOAA administrative support contractor. Only receipts in the scholar's name will be reimbursed by the administrative support contractor. Receipts for meals are not required.

All site visits must be completed by April 15. Scholars are encouraged to complete the site visit during their winter or quarter break.

Upon completion of the site visit, all scholars are required to submit the completed Site Survey Form to the NOAA Program Staff.

Can I drive my personal vehicle to my 10-week Summer Internship?

NOAA recommends that scholars do not drive to their summer internship if it is more than 500 miles (a one-day trip) from their departure city/town. If a scholar does drive, scholars will be reimbursed up to the cost of a round-trip airline ticket for mileage.

Pre-approval must be received from NOAA EPP/MSI for scholars to drive their vehicles (no more than 8 hours is recommended).

A vehicle is not required during the internships in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Silver Spring, Maryland apartment complex will charge a parking fee directly to the scholar that NOAA will not reimburse.

Can I drive a government vehicle during my 10-week Summer Internship?

The NOAA Office of Education, EPP/MSI USP program **does not permit scholars to drive government vehicles**. In the event an EPP/MSI USP scholar is permitted to drive a government vehicle by their NOAA mentor, the Office of Education will not accept any responsibility or liability to cover insurance or repair claims if the scholar is involved in an accident.

If I rent a vehicle during my 10-week Summer Internship, will I be reimbursed for the cost?

NOAA **will not** approve or pay the cost for rental vehicles for use during the summer internship. It is highly recommended that scholars select a summer internship site where a car is not needed if a scholar does not own a vehicle. Transportation needs should be assessed during the site visit.

When will my Summer Internship begin?

For students attending colleges and universities on the semester system, summer internships begin the last week of May and end 10 weeks thereafter. For students on the quarter system, internships may begin mid-June and end 10 weeks later in mid-August.

When do summer payments begin and how much are they?

During the summer internships scholars receive bi-weekly payments of \$1,400 which are deposited directly into the scholar's account. Scholars also receive \$200.00 per week as a housing allowance. The housing allowance is provided only if the scholar does not live at their permanent residence and the scholar's permanent residence is more than 50 miles from their summer internship. The housing allowance is provided to supplement, not entirely cover the cost of summer housing.

If I work on my project for more than 40 hours a week, will I be paid overtime?

No. Scholars receive \$700.00 per week during the summer internship periods in bi-weekly stipend payments for the training they receive during the internship. Undergraduate scholars are not hired as Federal employees.

How do I find summer housing during the 10-week Summer Internship?

During the first summer, scholars are required to reside in Silver Spring, Maryland for the 11 week period. The NOAA EPP/MSI Program office is located in Silver Spring, Maryland and will coordinate housing arrangements.

During the second summer scholars select internships from NOAA laboratories and field sites nationally and are required to identify summer housing during their site visit. NOAA has compiled a list of summer housing used by previous program participants. The EPP/MSI team will make that information available prior to your site visit upon request. NOAA will not enter into a lease agreement for scholars.

For all scholars, the housing allowance is \$200.00 per week provided you do not live at your permanent residence or your permanent residence is more than 50 miles away from your summer internship. **The housing allowance is not intended to cover all summer housing costs, rather to offset the costs associated with housing.** Scholars residing in Silver Spring, Maryland, or other NOAA funded housing will not receive the housing allowance regardless of its cost.

What are the requirements for the Final Presentation Week?

Scholars' participation in the final week Symposium in Silver Spring, Maryland, is mandatory each year of the program. The NOAA mentor and scholar will determine if the summer project presentation is either oral or in a poster format.

During the second summer internship, the program requires all scholars to travel to Silver Spring, Maryland, during the tenth week of the internship to present their project in a poster or oral (with Power Point) format to the NOAA scientific community. Travel will be coordinated by the NOAA administrative support contractor. NOAA will not reimburse scholars who purchase their own airline, bus, or train ticket, hotel, or car rental without pre-approval from NOAA. Scholars have the option to travel home at the end of their 9th week to deposit their personal effects and travel from their homes on Sunday to Silver Spring, Maryland. On Monday all scholars will either load their PowerPoint presentations onto designated laptops and check the video/graphics or mount the poster displays.

Will NOAA provide printing services for posters during Final Presentation Week?

Scholars will be reimbursed for the cost of printing posters for their project summary presentation upon submission of the original receipt. Printing services are **not** provided by NOAA.

Will I be paid for attending the Science and Education Symposium?

Yes. Scholars are required to present their summary project reports during the final week and will receive their stipend payment. The Science and Education Symposium is considered the 10th week of the summer internship.

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Mentors / Potential Mentors

What is the role of the EPP/MSI USP mentor?

The EPP/MSI USP mentor selected by the student scholar is responsible for: providing the student scholar with a NOAA-related research project in support of the student scholar's academic field of study that can be completed in 10-weeks; day-to-day guidance as needed; office space; a computer; and, access to a telephone, fax, and the internet. EPP/MSI USP mentors are also required to provide guidance on the research, science, operations, outreach, or policy topic, as well as assist the student scholar, as needed, in the selection of appropriate course work related to NOAA's mission for the duration of the student scholar's participation in the program. EPP/MSI USP program requests mentor assess the student scholar's progress during a mid-term and final evaluation; and provide constructive feedback.

First summer: Within the first week of selecting a mentor, the EPP/MSI USP intern and mentor should complete and sign a Project Plan for the EPP/MSI USP program and e-mail the signed plan to the NOAA program staff at epp.usp@noaa.gov.

Second summer: By the second week of the summer internship the EPP/MSI USP intern and mentor should complete and sign a Project Plan. The mentor is responsible for:

- completing the Mentor training at <https://doc.csod.com/client/doc/>;
- signing the student scholar's Research Training Report every two weeks;
- providing guidance on technology, science, policy, operations, and/or research activities, as related to a specific project;
- conducting a mid-term assessment and providing the student scholar and the EPP/MSI staff with comments/feedback;
- supporting the student scholar's presentation during the 10th week of the internship; and,
- completing an evaluation form at the end of the student internship and e-mail the evaluation to epp.usp@noaa.gov.

How do EPP/MSI USP scholars select a mentor for the 2nd Summer Internship?

Student scholars are provided a list of nationwide NOAA internship opportunities in early-fall. Scholars then contact the prospective NOAA mentor to discuss the project further and to determine their interest. If an agreement is reached, the student may e-mail the mentor an updated resume and e-mail the EPP/MSI Team information about the summer internship opportunity. After NOAA approves the student scholar's participation in a project, the student scholar, mentor and the EPP/MSI Team will select the date and time (not to exceed three days) for the site visit.

As a potential mentor with a single opportunity and several inquiries, how do I determine which student scholar is best suited for the position?

The selection process should be approached like a job interview. Potential student scholars may be asked questions about their skills; their academic, scientific, and research interests; and their overall success in courses relevant to the NOAA mentor's project, etc. Be mindful of the information exchange between you and the potential scholar and note that student scholars are contacting several potential mentors, who must also agree to the selection.

Is there training available for EPP/MSI USP student mentors?

Yes. Mentor training is required. Mentor training is available at <https://doc.csod.com/client/doc/>. After completing the training, please send the EPP/MSI Team a copy of the training certificate to epp.usp@noaa.gov.

Can EPP/MSI USP student mentors have more than one student scholar?

Yes. EPP/MSI USP student mentor's may host more than one student scholar per summer providing each student scholar has a discrete project assigned to him/her; however, student scholars **may not** share a NOAA project, unless the project has definite discrete components.

Do EPP/MSI USP student mentors provide a NOAA Badge?

No. NOAA Badges are provided to the student scholars during the mandatory orientation program by the Office of Education

Will NOAA mentors create an e-mail account for the student scholar?

No. NOAA Office of Education creates and maintains NOAA e-mail accounts for all student scholars for their 2-year term in the scholarship program. The student scholars are fully supported (monthly academic stipend, summer bi-weekly stipend, housing allowance) by NOAA's Office of Education. The student scholars' email accounts will be maintained by the OFA Mail Admin Group and will **not** be transferred to the host office operating units.

Can the mentor change the summer project?

If the mentor determines a change is required for the summer project, the mentor may request to change the project with the student scholar in coordination with EPP/MSI. Project changes must be agreed upon by the NOAA mentor, student scholar and EPP/MSI. If the new project is found to be unsuitable for the student scholar, the student scholar is required to select another NOAA project for the remainder of the summer internship.

Can the mentor assign multiple projects to the EPP/MSI student scholar?

No. Each student scholar must have one major project which can be completed in 9-weeks. At the end of the 9 weeks, the student scholar must present the results of that project to the NOAA community in Silver Spring, Maryland. Awards are given for the best presentations.

As the scholar's mentor can I allow the EPP/MSI USP scholar to drive our government vehicle during the Summer Internship?

The NOAA Office of Education has consulted the NOAA Office of Finance and Administration who has advised the program of the following: if a scholar drives a government vehicle and has an accident, the office to which the scholar is assigned, namely OEd is responsible for the cost associated with the vehicle repairs. Therefore, **OEd does not approve EPP/MSI USP scholars to drive government vehicles.** The NOAA Office of Education does not budget funds to cover vehicle repairs or insurance claims due to personal injury or liability.

Can the NOAA mentor pay for the student scholar's travel to NOAA field sites and/or conferences?

Yes. If funds are available, a mentor may cover travel costs for the student scholar to NOAA field sites, conferences and meetings that would enhance the student scholar's summer internship experience and add value to their project. The EPP/MSI USP program budgets funds to support the travel for the student scholar to two conferences during their term in the program. EPP/MSI USP student mentors are encouraged to work with their student scholar to submit an abstract to a professional conference where the student scholar presents the results of their summer internship.

Can the scholar's mentor attend the final presentations? Will OEd pay for the mentor's travel?

OEd is unable to provide any travel support to Silver Spring, Maryland, for the student's mentor to attend the final week of presentations. However, mentors are encouraged to attend the final presentations both to support their student scholar as well as to assist with the judging process.

What is the EPP/MSI USP program evaluation process?

At the end of the summer internship EPP/MSI scholar mentors will receive an evaluation form and are asked to assess the student scholar's preparedness, contribution, and performance during the summer internship. Student scholars are also provided a separate evaluation form to provide feedback on their experience with the project and the NOAA mentor.

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